DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 765 CE 065 049

TITLE	Meeting National Targets for Education and Training in Colleges.
INSTITUTION	Further Education Unit, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-85338-317-1
PUB DATE	Oct 93
NOTE	7p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *College Programs; Data Collection; *Educational Objectives; Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Job Training; *National Programs; Postsecondary Education; Success; *Technical Institutes; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Fourteen British further education (FE) colleges were surveyed to identify issues/problems related to meeting national targets for education and training. Factors facilitating and inhibiting reaching the targets were determined. The colleges expressed concerns about several areas: data collection, congruence of targets, national centers, breadth of the national targets, funding for students, and awareness raising. Cooperation between FE colleges and local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) was deemed a priority. Issues relevant to developing partnerships between FE colleges and TECs were identified, and a series of questions for TECs to consider when initiating local action and monitoring progress toward achieving local targets were formulated. Eight of the colleges had adopted the national targets as their college targets, two had adopted local targets, and eight had developed their own targets instead of/in addition to the national targets. Only two colleges felt that the national targets had significantly altered their priorities. Recommended actions related to the following were identified: marketing; services; curriculum, learning, and assessment; working with industry; human resources and quality issues; and resource and administrative issues. (National targets for education and training are appended.) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 363 765

October 1993

MEETING NATIONAL TARGETS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN COLLEGES

BACKGROUND

This bulletin examines how, from the perspective of a group of further education (FE) colleges, the national targets for education and training can be pursued. It identifies national issues that these colleges feel ought to be tackled and explores the relationship between Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and colleges. Since TECs have the responsibility for co-ordinating local action in pursuit of the targets their relationship with the colleges is of central importance. The bulletin goes on to consider target setting in colleges and give a checklist of the action that colleges are undertaking or planning which will contribute to meeting the targets.

The material presented here derives from phase one of an FEU project on meeting national targets which involved 14 FE colleges. Each college examined the path that it would have to take towards meeting the national targets by identifying relevant key events and activities, facilitating factors and inhibiting factors. This bulletin also includes a section on some of the Structures for Joint Planning with TECs project which examined the effectiveness of the local mechanisms that have been developed by TECs and colleges to undertake joint planning.

The project is funded jointly with the Employment Department. It is hoped that TECs and colleges will give careful consideration to the findings presented here.

THE TARGETS

The national targets for education and training are set out in the appendix. Each TEC has brought together industrialists, educationalists and other interested parties in its area into an education strategic forum to identify baselines of existing local achievement, identify local targets and create local action plans to achieve them.

The local targets set by each strategic forum are the annual local stepping stones towards the national targets. In some areas the existing levels of achievement (called baselines) may be well below the national averages. In such circumstances a strategic forum may have set some of its local targets at a more modest level than the national ones.

Since colleges will play a central role in tackling local targets it is important that they are fully involved in setting and reviewing them.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NATIONAL ISSUES

In the first phase of the project participating colleges expressed concern about the national issues set out below. Comments from the Employment Department are included in italics.

Collection of data

- A detailed national methodology for obtaining the information required and construction of baselines is lacking.
- Any nationally aggregated data using the present approach will be unreliable.

There are no plans for a national aggregation of the data at the moment.

- Greater clarity and consistency is needed in requests to colleges for data from TECs and national bodies.
- Further improvements are needed to college management information systems (MIS).

Congruence of targets

- Although the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) recognises the importance of the national targets, its overall growth targets for colleges in the next three years are not necessarily congruent with local targets. To contribute fully to the achievement of local targets some colleges may be asked to achieve higher rates of growth than those planned by FEFC.
- Most colleges are giving greater weight to FEFC targets than to the local targets set by their strategic forum because the former impact more directly on a college's income.

National centres

- Some colleges are national centres in particular fields. Local targets and action plans are not appropriate for them in these fields.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 065 049

Breadth of the targets

- National targets do not specifically refer to achievement below National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level two nor do they direct colleges towards targeting the unemployed. Vocational education and training at level 4 are also omitted and this may become an area of skill shortage as the economy expands. The omission of these targets may also act as a signal to colleges to give them a lower priority.

The National Advisory Council on Education and Training Targets is currently considering what changes in the targets might be necessary or desirable.

Funding students

- Current benefits legislation continues to act as a barrier to wider participation in education and training because people get more financial benefit from unemployment than they would obtain in grant income to continue their education and training.

- Some LEAs have severely cut discretionary awards. Colleges feel that the lack of appropriate financial support for students is a powerful disincentive to participation.

*The **Learning for Work** programme will help with this problem.*

- Lack of funding for the transport of students to and from college is a serious problem in some areas.

- National support for the provision of childcare facilities would make a very beneficial contribution to increasing participation.

Awareness raising

- Further national and local awareness raising is needed for the national targets. The achievement of the targets depends to a considerable extent upon the continuing growth in the numbers of people taking NVQs and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). Therefore further national and local awareness raising is needed to promote these qualifications.

- There is still widespread ignorance of these initiatives in industry and among the general public.

*A two-year awareness raising campaign was recently launched called **Make it Your Business**.*

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TECS AND COLLEGES

Working with local TECs was generally seen as a priority by the colleges in this project. They wished to participate in local planning to tackle the targets.

The FEU project examining **Structures for joint planning with TECs** explored the planning relationship in more detail through interviews with both TEC and college staff. Several relevant issues emerged for the development of the partnerships required to achieve the targets.

- Those interviewed, both from TECs and colleges, were not always aware of the potential importance of the education strategic forums as a mechanism for determining joint objectives. These forums have been set up by every TEC to bring together the interested parties, in order to establish baselines of current achievement, set local targets and develop local action plans to achieve these targets.

  In some cases meetings had been held, which those interviewed, on reflection, identified as being related to the setting up of such forums or where objectives for achieving the targets were explored. That this was not immediately apparent, points to the need for clearer communications between TECs and colleges. Those who had contributed to the development of strategic forums were adamant that they were the best way to proceed.

- Achievement of the targets is clearly of crucial concern to TECs who placed great emphasis on establishing a baseline for the targets locally. Some college principals noted, however, that there was an increasingly pressing need to establish links with the delivery mechanism to secure the actual achievement of the targets. This was reinforced by the colleges involved in the national targets project who reported that only two of them had become members of local groups specifically set up to tackle targets, other than the strategic forums themselves.

- One college was aware of where it sat in relation to the targets but thought that demonstrating achievement would be difficult in the absence of explicit targets set for the college.

- Other colleges saw their role in the achievement of the targets as unproblematic. For example in one college there was no disagreement over National Targets - they were 'not really contentious' (college principal) but the college felt they were addressing these anyway and the TEC made little difference.

- Among the 14 colleges in the National Targets project there proved to be wide variations in the extent to which colleges were invited to participate in strategic forums, in setting baselines, setting targets, and drawing up action plans. Some colleges were fully involved, some did not appear to have any involvement. Some senior college managers seemed unaware of any local targets that might have been set.

- Most colleges recognised the potential value of local collaborative ventures with other providers and wished to enhance them. The further development of such arrangements is a task that could be assisted by strategic forums and their sub-groups. Some colleges reported that valuable discussions were beginning to be held with other local organisations but no new collaborative ventures had yet been established.

- The quality of the local baseline data was felt to be very unreliable but colleges valued the labour market information from their local TEC which helped them to analyse their market situation.

- Some colleges have catchment areas covering more than one TEC. They are faced with different local targets from these different TECs.

QUESTIONS FOR TECS TO CONSIDER

TECs will be using their strategic forums to initiate local action and monitor progress towards the achievement of local targets. Local action is likely to involve collaboration between colleges and with a wide range of other organisations. In most TEC areas there may be several colleges in competition with each other for students. It is important that TECs are sensitive to these competitive pressures and take steps to ensure that all the colleges are dealt with in an open and fair manner. It cannot be assumed that the colleges will collectively sort out their own involvement in the various local initiatives unless the TEC calls them together to do so. The following questions may be helpful.

- How can the TEC involve/consult all its colleges in determining strategy and make clear to them the processes through which colleges are involved?

- How does the TEC determine the practical extent of college representation and enable the colleges to determine their own representation (e.g. on the strategic forum and its sub groups). Would a principals' forum be the best approach?

- How does nomination/representation/delegation from colleges work in practice? What are the respective roles and responsibilities of those chosen?

- How does the TEC establish the link between the strategic forum and existing groups/working parties/committees? How does it identify gaps in representation?

- How will FEFC and TECs communicate and work together at regional level to ensure coherence of planning and performance indicator requirements?

TARGET SETTING IN COLLEGES

- Eight of the colleges in the project had adopted the national targets as their college targets; two had adopted local targets and eight had developed their own targets instead of, or in addition to, the national targets.

- Most colleges have set specific targets for particular curriculum areas.

- At this stage there was no evidence of colleges agreeing with TECs, their numerical share of particular local targets.

- Only two of the colleges felt that the national targets had significantly altered their priorities. Most colleges felt that the targets supported the general strategy that they had already decided to adopt.

- Seven of the project colleges had already included a consideration of the targets in their strategic planning. Others are incorporating targets and action in support of the targets into their strategic plans as they are reviewed.

The above experiences suggest that it would be sensible for all colleges to incorporate their response to the local targets into their strategic plans. Contributing to the achievement of these targets should not be seen as separate from, or as an addition to existing college targets and activities. It should be fully embedded into the overall college strategy.

The contribution that each provider can make will vary according to the field in which they operate and the resources that they have available. Therefore they should not all have identical targets. Instead each organisation should have its own distinctive targets which, when aggregated with those of the other providers, will achieve the local targets.

In drawing up their existing development plans and setting their existing targets most colleges have:

- analysed the potential demand for their education and training services;

- examined other local provision to identify overlaps and areas of under provision;

- audited their own human and physical resources to identify potential for expansion.

Colleges could revisit the above processes to assist them to review their existing development plans in the light of the local targets. Colleges could:

- set their own targets which identify the contribution that they aim to make to the achievement of the local targets and which enable progress to be measured and monitored;

- identify barriers to the achievement of the local targets that need to be tackled;

- identify development opportunities to tackle the targets.

These barriers and opportunities may require action outside the college and could therefore, be fed back to the strategic forum.

Reviewing its development plan might enable the college to identify areas of possible collaboration with industry and other providers. The strategic forum ought to facilitate such collaboration.

The colleges in a particular TEC area might find it useful to meet each other to develop a common approach to target setting and to local collaborative action. This could facilitate the work of the strategic forum, strengthen the colleges' relationship with the local TEC and give them an influential voice in setting the agenda for the forum. However, it will require colleges to consider the extent to which they wish to share their development plans with each other.

COLLEGE ACTION

Colleges participating in the project are undertaking or considering the following action to contribute to meeting the targets.

College marketing

- analysing their local market and locating low participation;
- analysing other local provision;
- reviewing their curriculum offer including the times, locations and modes of learning;
- considering further outreach work and the outposting of provision on sites owned by other organisations such as schools;
- targeting promotional activity in line with the strategic plan;
- working in secondary schools and examining curriculum continuity from school to college;
- collaborating with TECs and other local services and providers in a planned strategy for the promotion of targets, NVQs and GNVQs to industry, in schools and to the public.

College services

- continuing the development of threshold, guidance and other student services including the introduction of diagnostic assessment;
- planning the full introduction of the National Record of Achievement (NRA);
- upgrading their MIS to improve student tracking;
- reviewing fees and enrolment arrangements;
- developing a tutoring policy with individual action and learning plans;
- actively promoting equal opportunities.

Curriculum, learning and assessment

- auditing, amending and developing the curriculum in the light of their market research and their college targets;
- increasing the flexibility and the range of the teaching and learning methods employed;
- introducing GNVQs as a major priority;
- considering the modularisation, of all or part, of the delivery of the curriculum;
- considering unitising assessment across the curriculum to facilitate credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) (Some of the colleges have joined the FEU national CAT network);
- considering how they can increase the number of entry and exit opportunities to programmes during the year;
- reviewing student entitlement, including core skills;
- extending assessment / accreditation of prior learning (APL) and diagnostic assessment — incorporating these into threshold services;
- exploring assessment on demand.

Working with industry

- expanding professional and consultancy services. These could include training needs analysis and assessment and accreditation services (Could the former be used as a promotional loss leader?);
- reviewing work experience opportunities — can they be expanded?
- exploring collaborative delivery and customised training.

Human resources and quality issues

- ensuring that the college has a quality system in place which will withstand outside scrutiny;
- becoming an 'Investor in People';
- undertaking awareness raising of targets in the college. (This is only seen as sensible when it is part of the construction of a single set of college targets. Colleges felt that the targets should not be presented as an extra initiative);
- considering how far the staff can be involved in the target setting and planning process to promote a sense of ownership of these developments;
- increasing the numbers of staff trained in assessment to TDLB standards and able to accredit the prior learning of students;
- undertaking further staff development in the techniques of guidance action / learning planning and in the acquisition of tutoring skills;
- considering the implications of the college strategy for staff conditions of service.

Resource and administrative issues

- auditing the use of accommodation and consider further extending the opening of the college including at weekends;
- examining ways of improving the costing of all college activities.

PHASE TWO OF THIS PROJECT

In phase two the colleges will be asked to undertake development work to provide FEU with case studies of strategies for achieving targets, including collaborative mechanisms. These should assist us to identify the strategic implications for colleges of the education and training targets.

COLLEGES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

Basford Hall College
High Peak College
Hinckley College
Northampton College
North Lincolnshire College
North Lindsey College of Technology
Oxford College
Peterborough Regional College
South Tyneside College
Stockton and Billingham College
Walsall College of Arts and Technology
West Suffolk College
Wirral Metropolitan
Woolwich College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FEU would like to thank TEED for supporting and part funding this work and for participating in events associated with it.

FEU project team

Paul Kneafsey (until March 1993)
Gordon Holding (from February 1993)
Kevin Donovan
Maria Hughes
Rosemary Moorse
Chris Parkin
Debbie Thornton

APPENDIX: NATIONAL TARGETS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Foundation learning

1. By 1997, 80% of young people to reach NVQ II (or equivalent).
2. Training and education to NVQ III (or equivalent) available to all young people who can benefit.
3. By 2000, 50% of young people to reach NVQ III (or equivalent).
4. Education and training provision to develop self-reliance, flexibility and breadth.

Lifetime learning

1. By 1996, all employees should take part in training or development activities.
2. By 1996, 50% of the workforce aiming for NVQs or units towards them.
3. By 2000, 50% of the workforce qualified to at least NVQ III (or equivalent).
4. By 1996, 50% of medium to larger organisations to be 'Investors in People'.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please note that all FEU documents are designed as working and/or discussion documents and may therefore be photocopied for any non-commercial use provided the source, i.e. FEU, is acknowledged.

If however you need further copies of this bulletin, please contact the FEU Information Centre, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH.
Tel: 071 962 1280 Fax: 071 962 1266

ISBN 1 85338 317 1

FEU registered charity number 326347

For further information on national targets please contact Gordon Holding on 021 643 8082

Printed by Blackmore Press, Dorset

FEU 016

BEST COPY AVAILABLE